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PROTESTERS SURROUND RAJAPAKSA'S RESIDENCE

Thousands of students gheraoed Mahinda Rajapaksa's official residence on Sunday demanding that he resign as PM

YOUTH TRY TO STORM THE COMPOUND

Protests have taken a more belligerent turn after Mahinda on Saturday dismissed calls to form an interim government. Sunday's protest saw several dozen members of the Inter-University Students' Federation scale the fence of Rajapaksa's compound in Colombo. Some of them defaced compound's boundary walls with graffiti reading "Go home, Rajapaksa!" | PTI

RAJAPAKSAS REBUFF CALLS TO STEP DOWN

- Rajapaksa was not at the premises when protesters tried to break in. The crowd eventually left peacefully, the police said
- Protests reached its 16th day on Sunday. Despite being dumped by several allies, the Rajapaksa brothers have refused to step down over the unprecedented economic crisis roiling the country

April 9

FROM WHEN THE PROTESTERS HAVE CAMPED OUTSIDE PREZ'S RESIDENCE

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

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Varsity games off to a start

Bengaluru: M Venkaiah Naidu, Vice-President, declared the Khelo India University Games open at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium here on Sunday. The audience were also treated to some edge-of-the-seat performances by Mallakhamb athletes, who met with a standing ovation in the opening ceremony. Besides, cultural programmes and traditional folk dances kept everyone entertained | P13

Athletes perform Mallakhamb during the opening ceremony of Khelo India University Games on Sunday | EXPRESS

PM reaches out to J&K youth with pitch on growth

FAYAZ WANI @ Srinagar

COMPLETELY sidestepping hot-button issues like militancy, infiltration and Pakistan in his first public address in J&K ever since Article 370 was hollowed out, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday focused on investment, development and democracy, and sought to reach out to Kashmir's youth. He also flagged off projects worth ₹20,000 crore.

"Developmental works in J&K are going on at full speed. They will provide jobs to the youth," Modi said while addressing about 30,000 panchayat members and thousands of men and women in Palli panchayat in Samba district to mark Panchayati Raj Diwas.

Modi said the panchayati raj system was earlier implemented across the country except in J&K. "Over 30,000 panchayat members have now been elected in J&K and for the first time the three-tier panchayat system is functioning in J&K."

As many as 175 central laws have been implemented in J&K, he said. "Valmiki samaj has been freed from the fetters put on their feet for decades. Today sons and daughters of every community are able to fulfil their dreams. Those who did not get the benefit of reservation in J&K for years, are in the quota ambit now," he added.

In his outreach to the youth, Modi said: "I want to tell the youth of Kashmir they will not face the difficulties their parents and grandparents did in the past. I will make it happen and I have come here to make you believe it."

The PM said many private investors are interested in making commitments in J&K. "In 70 years, J&K had received ₹17,000 crore private investment but in the last two years, the figure has touched ₹38,000 crore," he said, adding all tourist spots in the Valley are booked till June-July.

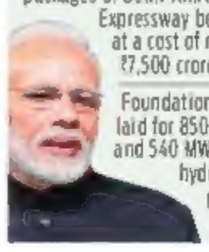
"I met UAE-based businessmen today and they were excited over investments in J&K," he pointed out. Top UAE businessmen had arrived in J&K a day earlier and interacted with Modi on Sunday. Referring to how paper pushing has been expedited, he said it used to take 2-3 weeks for a file from Delhi to reach J&K earlier. "Now look at the 500 KW solar power plant in Palli village. It was installed in a record three weeks and now all houses in the village have electricity. This change will take J&K to new heights," he said.

NEW PROJECTS

PM opens 8.45 km all-weather Banihal-Qazigund Road tunnel built at a cost of over ₹3,100 crore. It will reduce Srinagar-Jammu journey time by one-and-a-half hours

Inaugurates 500 KW solar power plant at Palli, which will make it country's first panchayat to become carbon neutral

Lays foundation stone of three road packages of Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway being built at a cost of more than ₹7,500 crore



Foundation stones laid for 850 MW Ratle and 540 MW Kwar hydroelectric projects on Chenab river

NEW COVID PROTOCOL AFTER APRIL 27: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Hubballi

IN the wake of Covid cases rising in several states, a fresh protocol will be issued after the chief ministers' meeting called by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 27, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said on Sunday.

He said that as Kerala and Maharashtra are reporting more cases, the Union government has instructed all the states to maintain restraint, and experts too have suggested taking precautions using the experience of the earlier three waves. Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar has also issued instructions in this regard.

Since the neighbouring states are witnessing more cases, there is a possibility of restricting the entry of people from these states into Karnataka, a senior Health Department officer said.

As Modi will hold a video-conference with chief ministers to discuss the Covid situation and action needed to be taken, fresh guidelines could be issued after the meeting. Scientists too have been studying the new variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes Covid. Based on their suggestions, a new protocol will be prepared later, Bommai said, while appealing to the public to be cautious and follow Covid norms.

Though Karnataka has witnessed a decline in cases and the situation is improving since February 21, Covid positive cases started rising over the past few days.

Ashish Mishra surrenders in Lakhimpur court

Lakhimpur: Union minister Ajay Mishra's son Ashish on Sunday surrendered at a local court here in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence that left eight persons dead. "Ashish has surrendered in the court. The Supreme Court had last week cancelled his bail and directed him to surrender. We were given a week's time but as Monday was the last day, he surrendered a day ahead," Ashish's counsel Awadesh Singh said. Jail Superintendent PP Singh said Ashish will be housed in a separate barrack in the jail | P10

Emmanuel Macron wins second term as French president

Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday won the presidential elections with his far-right rival Marine Le Pen conceding defeat. Centrist Macron was set to win 57.0-58.5 per cent of the votes compared with Le Pen's 41.5-43.0 per cent. Macron becomes the first French president to win re-election since 2002. He is expected to use his second term to implement his vision of more pro-business reform and tighter EU integration. Though Le Pen lost, it's for the first time a far-right leader will gain over 40% votes in France | P11

Time to amend anti-defection law, says Naidu

Bengaluru: Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday expressed concern over the loopholes in the anti-defection law and said amendment is needed to check mass defection of legislators. Delivering a talk on "Media's role in new India" at an event organised by Press Club of Bengaluru, Naidu was critical of the media saying "values were getting eroded." "In most of the cases, the Speakers, who are given powers to decide about defections, do not deal with defection effectively," he said | P4

ANOTHER TEST SCAM?

Video clip casts shadow on PWD JE exam too

RAMKRISHNA BADSESHI @ Kalaburagi

A VIDEO clipping allegedly showing answers to multiple choice questions being dictated over mobile phone for exams said to be for junior engineers of PWD held in December last year has cast a shadow on the future of candidates who appeared for the exam. This comes at a time when the Crime Investigation Department (CID) is conducting a probe into allegations of malpractice in the police sub-inspector common entrance test.

Sources from the CID, which is conducting the investigation in Kalaburagi, did not confirm recovering any incriminating documents related to illegalities in the PWD JE exam. "If the government asks us to probe that matter too and if any documents are available during the raids or made available to us, we will probe that issue," said the source. It is not known from where the video clipping has been released, but the answers seem to be for the PWD JE test question paper.

CID sources said that during raids on the residences of accused Mahantesh Patil and his brother RD Patil in Kalaburagi on Friday evening, they found hall tickets and OMR sheets of many candidates who appeared for CET of first division assistant, second division assistant and and hostel warden posts conducted by the Karnataka Public Service Commission over the last two years. "We have to probe why the Patil brothers were collecting hall tickets and OMR sheets and whether they were involved in other scams too," the source said. Mahantesh, who was the block Congress president at the time of arrest on Thursday, was produced before the court on Friday and remanded to police custody for a week. P4

Ludhiana blast suspect on the run for 12 years arrested

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

THE Punjab Police on Sunday arrested Charanjit Singh alias Patialavi, who had been evading the police for the past 12 years and is wanted in connection with a 2007 blast in Ludhiana, which killed seven people and injured 40.

Patialavi, an active member of Babbar Khalsa International, a terror outfit, was nabbed from a village near Mohali by the Anti-Gangster Task Force of the Punjab Police. He was using different identities and hideouts to evade the police. He had disguised himself as a *granthi* and was staying in a *gurdwara* at Kharagpur in West Bengal, the police said. He had come to Lali, a village in Mohali's Dera Bassi, a few days ago for personal reasons, they added. After getting reliable inputs on his presence in the village, an Anti-Gangster Task Force team went to Dera Bassi and arrested him. Police had registered a case against him on July 23, 2010 under various sections of the Explosive Act and the UAPA over the blast.

KIA Metro work to cut road space

Those heading to the Kempegowda International Airport from Monday will have to make do with restricted road space as the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited will barricade a portion of the Main Access Road from the MS Ramaiah Gate towards the terminal for infrastructure work | P2

Youth killed for asking biker to ride carefully

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN a case of extreme road rage, a 24-year-old was stabbed to death by a gang after a bike brushed against him and he asked the rider to go carefully, at Kengeri Satellite Town on Saturday night. The gang stabbed the victim, Bharath, a resident of MTS Layout, multiple times and left him to die near a railway track. He was working as a sales manager at an electronics goods showroom in Ullal Upanagar.

The incident occurred around midnight when Bharath and his friends were returning after watching the Karaga procession. The bike, ridden by two men, brushed against Bharath's hand. He stopped them and advised them to ride carefully as there were a lot of people moving around. The accused left the spot but returned later with eight more of his friends. They took Bharath to an isolated place near a railway track, stabbed him at least 15 times and left him to die.

Bharath's friends, who were searching for him, alerted the Kengeri police. P3

NATIONWIDE	APR 23	APR 24
Fresh cases	2,527	2,593
Recoveries	1,656	1,755
Deaths	31	44

KARNATAKA	APR 23	APR 24
Fresh cases	139	60
Recoveries	55	63
Deaths	0	0

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